

G.A.R. Building

1942 Grand River Avenue

Local

State

State Marker

National v 2/13/86



G.A.R. Building, façade elevation along W. Grand River



Historic overview:

The G.A.R. Building is historically and architecturally the most pre-eminent Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) hall building in the state. The G.A.R. was a society founded in 1866 for men who fought for the north in the civil war. Its purpose was to strengthen the fellowship of men who fought to preserve the Union, honor those killed in the war, provide care for their dependents and uphold the Constitution. The G.A.R. served as a lobbying group, and started the custom of celebrating Memorial Day on May 30, 1868 to honor the graves of Union soldiers. Eventually, 391 G.A.R. posts were established in Michigan alone.

Veteran groups lobbied the city to erect a memorial meeting building in 1891. The site selected was part of the Cass Farm, containing the Cass Market. The market was demolished and the G.A.R. building was constructed from 1897-1900, with the stipulation that the first floor be devoted to a public market. The G.A.R. collected the market rents while the city maintained the building. The building is notable as an example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture in Detroit, and a very important work of its architect Julius Hess.

Various veterans groups utilized the G.A.R. Building as a gathering place for parties, dances, meetings, and celebration of national holidays. By the 1930s, few G.A.R. members were still living. Therefore, the city made some renovations and leased the building. The G.A.R. Memorial Association has not held meetings in the G.A.R. Building since 1973. The structure is being sold to private developers and is to be rehabilitated for office use.

